

# INFANTRY LETTERS



## TRAINING AS WE WILL DIE

This past summer, the National Guard—with some Active Army pressure—finally developed a training plan that lowers the level of unit training to squad and platoon, where it should have been all along. Gone are the days, at least for now, of large-scale exercises that train the few at the expense of the many.

MILES lanes last summer concentrated everyone's attention on an idea that has been around for a while but that has received scant application in the past. Someone deserves enormous credit for this initiative to redirect our training resources at a level that makes complete sense.

But, alas, there is a snag. If other units are conducting the MILES lanes as some units in this state are conducting them—and I fear there are many others—then we are seriously threatened with changing from “training as we will fight” to “training as we will die.” Our present methodology is too predictable, and it must be reevaluated and reconstructed. Our future combat soldiers have to be trained to expect the unexpected.

Not adhering to the rules of engagement on occasion pales in comparison to the sterile environment of lanes that offer little in the way of “initiative” training for the good guys as well as the bad guys.

Not only do the good guys know specifically the one or two tasks required of them before they reach the objective, but they also have the luxury of conducting a dry run over the terrain.

This method allows for the absorption of a great deal of intelligence that real combat soldiers are often deprived of.

The opposing force (OPFOR), on the other hand, is too restricted. They cannot practice virtually every standard for their ARTEP counter-tasks. They must remain in the same positions for both the dry run and the wet run.

The tragic consequence of such training is that soldiers will become conditioned and expect that real situations will offer the same step-by-step methodology. The good guys will meet their end when the bad guys aren't where they are supposed to be or aren't playing by the rules.

The great thing about MILES lanes, as my unit has experienced over the years, is the tremendous initiative the soldiers demonstrate. Having a primary objective is fine, but the training should not be so restrictive that the soldiers on neither side can choose to develop their own plans and then react to a variety of situations as they develop in a variety of ways.

Some years ago, when the 7th Infantry Division trained in the mountains of Korea, it didn't have the advantages of the ARTEP manuals. If it had,

it surely would have been an even better unit. The Active Army soldiers over-seeing the MILES lanes for the National Guard this summer did not go back to the days when the 7th Division trained in Korea. If they had, they would have understood the advantage the division's leadership had over the leadership of today. Despite the lack of good training manuals at that time, there was the development and free-play of initiative. That critical trait needs to be nurtured and not restricted by the conduct of today's training.

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## VETERANS OF THE NORMANDY INVASION

I am calling on all veterans of the Normandy invasion, in whatever capacity, to contribute their own taped oral histories to the D-Day collection at the Eisenhower Center, where we are attempting to preserve the record of the common soldier, sailor, and airman. And, for the 50th Anniversary in 1994, we plan to publish a book titled *Voices of D-Day* which will be based on these oral histories.

Please write to me for details at The Eisenhower Center, University of New Orleans, Ed-128, Lakefront, New Orleans, LA 70148.

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